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OUR
UNITARIAN FAITH
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

J. T. MARRIOTT



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OUR UNITARIAN FAITH FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

SIX SUNDAY MORNING DISCOURSES.

PREACHED AT

STRANGEWAYS UNITARIAN FREE CHURCH,
MANCHESTER,

BY

J. TOWLE MARRIOTT, MINISTER.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

Our freedom does not mean that we have no definite teaching. We are bound to provide an answer to the question: What do you, as Unitarians, believe? I am one of those who feel it specially useful to set before young persons growing up in our churches some outline of our Unitarian doctrine; and because we are so much distinguished for the lack of such things, I venture to commit to the press these six discourses, almost as I preached them in my church. Nobody will see their imperfection more clearly than I do myself; yet I am not without hope that they may meet a real want in our body, and prove useful to some readers, as I think they have done to a few hearers.

J. T. M.

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Can you find a Trinity in the New Testament.

“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Eph. iv. 6.

THE question I desire to ask you this morning, my young friends, is whether you can find the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament? I ask this question in all seriousness, and in the hope that you will each look for yourselves, and see if the answer I am going to give is the true answer. But before we open the New Testament for our search, let us consider this doctrine first a moment; let us consider what is meant by it. The word Trinity is rather difficult to

understand. The first part of it, 'Tri,' means three, and the other part, 'Unity,' means one ; so that the whole, Tri-Unity, shortened into Trinity, means one in three, or three in one. Most Christian people imagine (they do not think much on the subject, but thoughtlessly believe just what is told them in church or chapel) that they must apply this word to their belief in God ; they worship Him as if He who is one had somehow three parts in His nature, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They imagine that there is some good to be got by regarding God in this manner. The hymns they sing often have the idea in the last verse ; and at marriage and baptism, and in all their ceremonies, they bring it in, so as to keep well in mind God's threeness, as if it were a doctrine of very great importance. Now, we are met together this morning in our Unitarian Church, in a church, that is, in which that doctrine is not believed ; in a church where God is thought of always as One person, One and not three. I am going to show you this morning and next Sunday morning, why we think that God is not Trinity, but Unity. And I have asked you now if you can find the Trinity in the New

Testament, because, as you know, it is to the New Testament that nearly all Christian people look first for what they ought to believe. If you were to go into almost any place of worship to-day, and ask where the worshippers get their Christianity, you would be told that they get it from the New Testament. Very well, then, I say, let us see if the New Testament really teaches the Trinity. Let us test the question if that book sets forth the threefold nature of God, as they seem to think. On the other hand, you will find that the general teaching of page after page is that God is just the One who is Almighty, and who is the Father of all. But I must not beg the question; let me try and prove what I have said.

My first statement is that if you will search the New Testament from the beginning of Matthew to the end of Revelation, you will find that the *word* Trinity is not once made use of. That is worth remembering—the word Trinity is not to be once met with in the New Testament. Still, perhaps it is argued, the *idea* may be there without the word. So we will look at any passage that may seem to carry in it the idea of God as three persons in One

Being. I will ask you, then, to turn to a passage which the believer in the Trinity used to be very fond of quoting ; but you must kindly turn to the authorised version in the first instance. 1 John, v. 7. It there reads : “ For there are three that bear record in heaven—the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.” This passage is the only one in which the Divine Being is regarded as three. I will examine it with you in a moment ; but before doing so, I want just to ask anyone of you if it is not strange that the New Testament should only contain one verse of this kind if such a doctrine were meant to be believed? Why, we should have thought, if God were a Trinity, and must be worshipped in that way, that there would be fifty or a hundred texts to explain it for us. No ; this is the only text that refers to any such idea. Will you bear that in mind, that not a hundred passages, nor even ten, but only one speaks of God in this threefold sense? But now, I am going to tell you further, that even that single passage has no business to be there ; it is like a man who is trespassing, and who runs away as soon as he hears the keeper coming. If you will turn to the New Version, the same chapter

and verse, you will see that the passage has been struck out. It is in our New Testament no longer. And why has it been struck out? I will give you what I think is the right explanation. In the course of these Sunday morning addresses to young people, I shall speak to you once about the Bible, and I do not want to dwell on that subject now, but to keep to what is before us—Can you find the Trinity in the New Testament? I must, however, just tell you one thing about the Scriptures, which may help you to understand how it is that this passage is not in the New Version, as I am very glad it is not. When the New Testament was written, as many of you know, there was as yet no such invention as printing. Every copy had to be made with the pen, in manuscript, or, as we should say now, in hand-writing; and for this purpose writers were employed to copy the books for use in Christian Churches. These penmen, or scribes as they were called, sometimes, of course, made mistakes in copying. Occasionally the writer was not able fully to make out what he had to transcribe; and as others were waiting for his work, he wrote his own thoughts at the margin, as a sort of ex-

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planation. This passage about the three in heaven that bear witness, was evidently written at the side by a copyist, who thought that something of the kind was needed to make out the sense. If you look at the next verse you will see that it says, "and there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood." I suppose the scribe felt that this verse was incomplete, so he put in at the side the explanation, and says, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit." Then afterwards another copyist comes to the same point, and he writes all he finds before him, including the little bit in the margin. It has long been known by those who have studied the Greek Testament, that this text about the threeness of God had crept in wrongly, and must not be used as if it were rightful Scripture; the revisers, who have lately given us the New Version, have been obliged to admit this view, by leaving out the verse altogether.

We now come to another kind of statement which is sometimes made by those who believe in God as a Trinity. The Apostle Paul wrote many letters, or as they were called, epistles,

to the Christians up and down that part of the world near to the scene of Christ's life ; and it was his way to close these letters with a prayer for God's blessing to rest in their midst. For instance, at the end of his two epistles to the Christians at Corinth, he says : " The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." Will any candid person say that there is any proof in this that God is three ? If I am asked to say what the passage means, I say that Paul is thinking of the God who is in and over all, the One God, and the sweetness of that beautiful life which Christ had lived, and of the spirit of love and power that filled the new-born church. He does not say that these three are God ; he does not hint at anything of the kind. Why, in another place, in closing his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul speaks only of the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Might we not just as well say, therefore, that he is then thinking about God as if God were twofold, not threefold ? Such reasoning is altogether foolish. The fact is, whatever Paul thought of Jesus, he felt that God was the One Being whom the Jews had called Jehovah. He has no belief in

the Trinity, which as a Christian doctrine had not then come into existence. It is idle to suppose that this great apostle of Jesus imagined God to be three in one, merely because he mentions God, and Christ, and the new religious spirit, all in the same verse.

But there is still another set of passages which the Trinitarians are fond of quoting. They try to prove that God is Trinity from the lips of Jesus himself. They take us to the Gospel of John, the most difficult Gospel of all to understand, and point our attention to John x. 30, where we read, "I and my Father are one." When Jesus uses these words, they tell us he is claiming to be himself God, one of the three parts of Deity. If we reflect for a moment we must see how absurd it is ever to speak of Jesus, a man living on this earth of ours, as the same as God, or as if he claimed any such thing. Do you not remember how when a certain one came to him and asked what he must do to have eternal life, Jesus answered, "Why askest thou me concerning that which is good—One there is who is good." And I can imagine that as he said this Jesus lifted his hand toward heaven, toward the infinite, all-loving

Father. Let anyone read carefully this chapter in John, in which Jesus speaks of himself as one with God, and I am sure it will soon appear that he could have no such meaning as they say. Some of the Jews want to bring Christ to judgment as an evil doer, and he claims that God has given him strength and wisdom, and that God is on his side. The meaning is that he and the Father above are united in the bond of one purpose, one spirit. Just as a beam of light is one with the great sunshine, so Christ was one with God in his wishes and the love within his heart. Or as a note of music is one with all sweet sound, but is not itself the great mystery of sound, so Jesus is harmonious with the Divine Being, and still is human like ourselves. He is not God the Son, but man the Son of God, and his life was in spiritual agreement with God, because God's light and love dwelt richly in his soul. This is what Jesus claims, and it spoils his beautiful teaching to think of his words in any other way.

Besides, if we turn to another chapter, we shall find that Jesus explains these words in the sense I have described. He again speaks (chap. xvii.) of this oneness between God and

himself: he speaks about it to the disciples almost at the end of his days. He tells them what wondrous help the Father has given him in his holy work. And at the 11th verse he says, "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are." Even as we are! How could the disciples be one, as Christ and God are one, if it were not this harmony of thoughts, this union of spirit? The disciples are to be one, as Christ is one with the Father; not all one being, but alike in their aim, and bound together in one perfect love. As Charles Wesley says in one of his best hymns:—

Father, at Thy footstool see,
Those who now are one in Thee;
Each to each unite and bless,
Keep us in Thy perfect peace.

There is an occasion in the story of Christ that often comes to my own mind when I am thinking on this subject. It is when the disciples came and asked him to teach them how to pray. In answer to that request Jesus gives them what we call the Lord's Prayer, which we still use in our services, and which children learn to repeat at home. I could not think of Jesus thus at

prayer if the Trinity were true. For though people tell us that in Jesus there were two lives, and it was the human parts, not the God life, which prayed, still I could never get it out of my mind that the second person of the Godhead would thus be praying to the first. No! In the Lord's Prayer we learn that Jesus looked up in worship to One whose throne is in the heavens, the Father of mankind, just as you and I may do when we come, as now, to worship in His temple as His children.

Then, lastly, let us consider what is meant by the Holy Spirit, which people regard as the third person in the Godhead. When the end of Christ's life drew very near, he promised his disciples that the spirit of remembrance should be given them, and make them strong for the duties and trials they would have to meet, after he was gone away. He did not promise them the third person of a Trinity, but a comforting strengthening spirit. But God *is* a spirit, and the spirit which comes upon the disciples of Christ is the Father Himself, the only one, who brings to mind the sacred lesson of the past. There is but one God, though we may vary the name in which we speak of Him. In the first

chapter of Genesis, God is the Creator, making the heavens and the earth. In later ages we find Him spoken of as the Lord, as Jehovah, as the Eternal. On one page He is the King of Kings, on another He is the Shepherd who leads His flock into the green pastures and by still waters. He is the Most High ; He is the Saviour ; He is the Father. Jesus said the Comforter should come. It is the same spirit. All these are various names for the One God. I should not wish to have only one name ; for no single name can describe Him fully to our minds. We need to think of Him in different aspects, and as drawing near to the world in many differing ways. Yet we know that God is one, though you may have three names for Him, or a hundred names. He is everywhere ; but He is one. He works in this sphere and that, but He is one divine worker. He changes the winter into the spring, and spreads around us the charm of these tender flowers which gladden the earth ; and He who makes the flowers come forth is He who whispers in your heart of what is right for you to do, of what is dutiful and like Jesus Christ. The New Testament does not teach us that God is three ; it shows us how

manifold is His goodness ; how just He is, and how merciful in all His varied works. And I believe that if you young people will learn to read it for yourselves—remembering how it has come down to us through many hands, some of which now and then made mistakes—you will find in its pages this Unitarian Faith. You may not understand all that you read, as I do not, but if you read it thoughtfully, you will find that in the New Testament there is a kind of echo of that voice addressed to the Jews in ages before, “ Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.”





How did the Early Christians come to believe in God as Trinity?

“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Eph. iv. 6.

TRIED to show you last Sunday, my young friends, that the doctrine of the Trinity is not to be found in the New Testament. I showed you that the New Testament does not contain the word Trinity, and that the only verse which referred to this three-ness of God had got in by some mistake, and has at last had to be struck out. I showed you what I think is specially important—that Jesus

did not teach any such idea, but, on the other hand, he taught us to think about God simply as the one great Father in heaven. I showed you, too, that Paul, the apostle of Jesus, did not go about teaching God as a Being with three parts; and just the same may be said of the other apostles—those who first began to spread the religion of Jesus in the world. In other words, I say that the New Testament is Unitarian; it sets forth our own Unitarian Faith. There is not a page of it in which we read that God is the Father, and God is the Son, and God is the Holy Ghost, and these three are one God.

Well, then, you naturally ask, how it is that people have come to believe in the doctrine, which he who gave us the Sermon on the Mount did never teach. That is the question I want to try and answer for you this morning. It is not an easy subject to deal with, but I will use the simplest language I can find in placing it before you; and I hope that you may follow up the study of it a little for yourselves.

Try, then, to form a picture in your minds of the first Christians after the time of Jesus. He has raised up a new religion; he has announced a kingdom of heaven on earth, and his

followers are earnestly carrying on the Master's work. They feel that in this religion of Jesus there will come a better and happier life for the people ; that if instead of going on in the old religious customs which had become hard and dry, they would turn their eyes to that beautiful life of Christ, and cultivate the love for one another which he had set before them, then quite a new light would seem to shine upon the world. So the apostles went about earnestly preaching the life and love of Jesus. It filled their hearts to overflowing. It made them eloquent ; and many people came and gave up the old religion and adopted the new, which was going to bring so much blessing into their lives. Let us now imagine that a hundred years or so have passed since Jesus was crucified. The Christians have formed many societies or churches for the worship of God according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, while fresh converts are every day coming over to them from among the Jews, and from other nations as well. There is one thing that I now specially ask you to take notice of, and that is that as yet the Christians have no doctrine of the Trinity. A hundred years, with the teaching

of Jesus still, as it were, ringing through the land! but there is no belief among them that God has three persons in His being. There is only one true God in their thoughts, that is God the Father, and they look upon Jesus as His great prophet. But I will tell you what has begun to take place, and what takes place still further during the next hundred years. It is this. The idea about Jesus himself has changed. Instead of the man he was, some of his followers have now got to think of him as a sort of *lesser* god, a sort of God-man. The Father is God Almighty; Jesus is something of God too, less than God the Father, as the little plant is less than the giant oak tree of the forest, but still a God-man. There has slowly grown up a misunderstanding, a vain and foolish superstition in regard to Christ; some of his followers seeming to think that he came, almost by magic, out of the heavenly world, and was God made flesh to dwell among us. Those of you who have read anything about other religions, such as Buddhism, or Mohammedanism, will have noticed that the founders of them have nearly always been worshipped, almost as if they were gods, after their death. Especially in ages

long ago, the founder of a new faith became lifted up in the imagination of the people who lived soon afterwards. They were not satisfied to believe that he was one like themselves; that he was merely human. As his fame spread he got looked upon as something divine, a marvel, a lesser god. I ask you to take note of this, which happened in the case of Jesus. I shall have to ask you to remember it in a minute or two, when I go on to point out what else happened among the early Christians. Remember that, although people did not call Jesus God, in the sense of some who do now say very foolishly that he is God, and though they, it is clear, had not made God into a Trinity, they had nevertheless begun to speak of Jesus in the way I have told you; as the very Word of God come down to earth by some miraculous power, as the God-man, who was able to speak to us the inmost secrets of heaven. And this was what the people were most talking about; how much of him was God, and how much man. There was considerable difference of opinion; but the belief gained ground that Jesus was a divine being in human form.

Well, Christianity grew and multiplied; converts kept coming over to it from the other religions. Try and picture these new comers, giving up many of their old beliefs and joining the Church of Christ. Some of them were Greeks, some were Romans, some Egyptians. Perhaps if we just pause here and have a look at the Egyptians, I shall be better able to make it clear to you what happened to Christianity with the coming over to it of these foreigners, or heathens, as we sometimes hear them called. The Egyptians were a very remarkable people, for they had their arts and sciences, and their philosophy, long before Jesus lived. And they had one thing about them that is very important for us to know, that is a fondness for dividing things into threes. It is difficult to know why they should have made three a sacred number, but they believed, before Christianity had ever been heard of, that God, or rather each of their gods—for they had many—was a being with three divisions. I don't know whether you young people have ever seen a picture of the Sphynx, that great monument of the Egyptian life of thousands of years ago, which stands there in the desert for everyone who visits that strange

country still to see ; but when you next come across a picture of it, you will see a specimen of the fondness that old people used to have for dividing things into three. One part of it is like a man, another like an ox, and the third like a lion ; and of course each part was for some thought they desired to keep before their attention. That was a kind of Trinity, you see, three in one ; and, as I say, the Egyptians had no end of Trinities. They turned everything they could into three, and especially their God. You must not suppose, however, that it was only the Egyptians who did this, though they did so perhaps in larger degree ; for in several countries, before the time when Jesus lived, there were similar beliefs that God was three in one, one in three, in some mysterious fashion. It was so in India, in Assyria, it was so in Greece. If you will be patient another minute or two, while I am on this point, I should like to say something about Greece, a country even more interesting for learning and the arts than Egypt had been. More than 300 years before Christ, there lived a Greek whose name was Plato, and this Plato had taught that the Almighty was threefold. He was the

First Cause, He was the Reason or the Word, and He was the Soul of the universe. The followers of Plato dwelt on these things, and made more and more of them ; and so at the time when Christianity was in its early stages of progress, there already existed what we may call a Platonic Trinity. There were Trinities in the Egyptian creed, and in other religions. And this is just the fact which I want to impress upon you as the best way of answering the question we have before us ; how came the early Christians to believe in God the Trinity, when Jesus had declared Him to be the one Eternal Father ? I have brought you to the edge of the answer. If you will recall what I have just been saying about these foreign Trinities, the whole explanation will now, I hope, become clear to you.

This, then, is the explanation. The Trinity gradually crept in along with these new comers. I should like you to learn that sentence off by heart. The threeness of God, which Unitarians do not believe in, slowly crept into Christianity with these new comers. For although they became converts to Christ, they could not altogether shake off their former ideas ; and by

conversation and writing, their ideas got mixed up with Christian belief. Though they might desire to follow the teaching of Jesus, still they could not help clinging to some of their own teachings at the same time, and little by little these things found their way into Christianity. But the Trinity, as you may imagine, did not get in all at once. It came a step at a time, and its full coming in took several hundred years. And it met with a great deal of opposition. There were many who did not like this foreign style of faith. They said, "It does not come from Christ himself." Others, however, liked the doctrine; I will tell you why, if you will recall what I said a few minutes ago about the change which had come over the belief in Christ. Those who had tried to make him a God, felt that this new doctrine of the Trinity would help their purpose. The Trinity would find a divine place for Jesus. He would become part of the Godhead. They would then be able to say; Jesus is God the Son, instead of saying Jesus is the Son of God, which is an altogether different thing—for Paul speaks of us *all* as being sons of God. They would then place the Christ, as it were, by the Almighty, as the

second person of the three. And so, gradually, the error became too much for the truth, and overpowered it. At length, amid much controversy, and sometimes rousing a great deal of angry feeling on both sides, the Trinity was made an established article of faith among the Christians.

But I imagine someone reminding me that I have so far only described two parts of the Trinity—the Father and the Son ; where is the third ? That is a very natural enquiry to make, but the answer is very simple. The third person in the Trinity did not get thought about until the last. The great anxiety had been to have Jesus raised from man into the Godhead. When that was done, the rest was not a very difficult matter. The spirit of remembrance which Jesus had promised his disciples must be the third person. People did not mind so much about the third as you may see at once if you will read the Apostles' creed, and the Nicene creed. It is quite noticeable how little is said about the Spirit, and even of God the Father too, and how much is said about Jesus Christ. For the great thing, as I have said, was to set forth the Son as God, or having share in

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God, and the Trinity was a help toward the object in view, the Spirit being put into the third part of the arrangement. The Spirit was the last to come into this threefold partnership, and it was a very long time before it found an equal place with the other two.

I must come to the end ; but I hope I have been able to show you that for a considerable time after the life of Jesus the Christians were Unitarian like ourselves, believing in one Fatherly Spirit who was God alone, and Jesus as His revealer, His human son. It was not until 170 years after his time that the word Trinity came into use, and even then it was very seldom used. Years passed away and heathen thoughts kept getting in a little at a time. There were great councils called to discuss the changes that were being made. One of those great councils was held at Nicæa, in the year 325 ; it was summoned by the Emperor Constantine ; there the strife waxed very hot, and Arius, who declared that Jesus was not God, as the equal of God the Father, was banished for his views, and the creed which in the English Prayer Book is called the Nicene creed, not quite as it is now, but similar, was

passed by a majority of votes. Nearly fifty years after this, another council was held at Constantinople (381), at which the Spirit was declared equal to the Father and the Son. So things went on, bringing the Trinity more and more to the front. If you take up the Church Prayer Book, and read the Athanasian creed, as it is called, you will find God described as three persons in one Being, all equal to one another, and it is declared that if we do not believe in God exactly as He is there described, we shall without doubt perish everlastingly. That presumptuous creed was not written until five hundred years after Jesus; it was not written by Athanasius, who had been dead more than a hundred years. And many people who attend the Church of England service do not like the days when the creed is repeated. I have even heard clergymen say they wished themselves well rid of it. It is a blot upon Christianity, it is a contradiction to the kind and holy spirit of Jesus, from whom we learn that God is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.

And this is what I want to say in conclusion, that we Unitarians are aiming to get back to the

teaching of Jesus, to get back to God the Father. I will give you a little parable. There is a spring of water rising in the high mountains. It flows down in a clear crystal stream, a river of sweetness for the thirsty traveller to drink of on his way. But into this sweet stream there flow other waters and mingle with it, and these other streams are not clear, and when they mix with it the clearness is gone. That spring of living water is Jesus and his thoughts of God; those other streams are the heathen notions which flowed into it and spoiled its sweetness. We are trying to get back to his teaching before it was spoiled, to feel as he felt, not that God is three in one or one in three, or anything of the kind, but that we are children of One God of love, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in us all.





Jesus Christ and his Salvation.

"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." John i. 29.

THE third subject upon which I desire to speak to you, my young friends, is—
What do we Unitarians mean when we call ourselves Christians, and what hope have we in the Salvation of Christ? I have hitherto spoken to you on the subject of God, and showed you that in the New Testament, and for a long time afterwards, God was simply regarded as the Father of all, and that we ought to go back to that simple idea instead of believing in this Trinity-faith, which is found now-a-days in so many Churches. In the course of my two former addresses I have had to speak of Jesus Christ a good deal;

and I have always spoken about him as the man Christ Jesus. But I have not yet explained how it is that the name of Christ is connected with the hope of our Salvation. He is said to take away the sin of the world. My text says, "Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." What do these words mean ?

It is necessary for a moment to go back in imagination to the time of Christ. The Jews had been looking forward to the coming of a great leader, a great deliverer. For they had suffered sore hardships at the hands of foreign conquerors; they had wandered in the desert and been taken into captivity, and, to use the language of one of their old psalms, they had often "eaten the bread of tears." Some of the people, too, had fallen into grievous sin, and forgotten the goodness of the Most High. The best of them, those who had kept their hearts pure, began to look forward to the time when Messiah would come, an anointed one, who should redeem them from all past evils and fill them with new and joyous life. The Old Testament gives us the story of the people Israel, and the expectation of a deliverer which

grew up in their midst. It gives us a sort of moving panorama of all they passed through, until Christ came ; and when he came at last, the man of Nazareth, he saw that what the people needed was a new religion ; a stronger and truer faith in God, the God of their fathers. And when he was grown up to manhood he began to go about among them and teach them to look up to God with a new heart, and put their trust in the Divine goodness which had never really deserted them, though like the sunshine it might often have been hidden behind the clouds. You know what soon took place. Many believed in him, and found their life made holier and brighter by his teachings. But others were offended. They said that this Jesus was an upsetter of society ; that he was doing mischief, and must be got rid of. He was not the sort of teacher to be their Messiah ; he was an enemy to some of their old customs which they valued more than almost anything else. The party who thus took offence were very powerful in the State, and they prevailed upon the Roman authorities to have him put to death.

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming one day to be baptised of him in Jordan, and he said,

“Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” He was evidently thinking of a custom the Jews had of sacrificing the lamb at one of their feasts as a sin offering to God ; and he seems to say that in the religion of Jesus there will be an end of such things. God does not require them. They do not make the man any better in his soul ; let the people look upon Jesus, once for all, as the lamb of God taking away the sin of the world.

You see that it was a past religious habit of the Jews that was referred to when Jesus was spoken of as “the lamb.” If the same writers had lived to-day they would have spoken about Christ in different language ; in the language of the present time, and according to different ideas, because we now have no such customs. The text does not belong to our time, except as a figure of speech, which we can only understand by going back in imagination eighteen hundred years, and thus getting to know why it was used.

Now, my young friends, leaving the special text, I want to try and make one thing clear to you. Christians in these later days have been quite wrongly taught in regard to Jesus, and

what he does for them as their Saviour. They make two or three mistakes so serious that we Unitarians feel obliged to contradict what they believe; and it is with the earnest wish that you may grow up in true thoughts about the life of Jesus, and how it provides Salvation for us, that I have brought the subject before your attention this morning.

The first mistake they make is this. They suppose that all the world lies under the Father's anger, and that He intends to cast out a great number into eternal fire. I can well remember that in my own Sunday School days (for I was not brought up in a Unitarian Sunday School, like some of you). I was taught to believe in these false ideas. I can well remember that in the hymns we used to sing there was a great deal said about the angry Father in heaven, who seemed to be waiting to take vengeance against those who had not managed to obtain His forgiveness. What a terrible thought that is, when one comes to think of it with all our intelligence; but indeed very few persons do think of it intelligently, among those who believe in it the most. We may suppose a man going about his daily

duties, or a mother busy with her cares at home, or children at play, or even the little infant asleep in its cradle, and against all of them God is supposed to have pronounced this doom, until the Saviour comes and interferes! That is a belief I can hardly find language strong enough to contradict as much as I should like to do. I am sure there is no one of you who could believe such a thing. It is outrageous to our best feelings; we cannot entertain it for a moment. Indeed, I may gladly tell you that this doctrine is not now as much preached as it used to be. Both ministers and congregations have come to be a little ashamed of it; and many leave it out as much as they can. Still, in some places of worship you might hear it preached even now; this terrible doctrine that God will cast into hell all who do not find the special sort of Salvation which they say Jesus has brought down from heaven.

I often wonder how heaven could be so full of pleasure to those who know that some of their neighbours are cast into the flaming fire for ever. George Mac Donald, in his story of Robert Falconer, describes a conversation be-

tween Robert and his good old grandmother, who believed in these things; and he makes Robert declare, in quaint Scotch language, that he is quite sure he could never enjoy a single hour in heaven for thinking of the poor creatures in torture down below; and he declares he would see if there were not some way of getting them all back to the foot of the throne before he himself sits down to the feast. Do you wonder that Unitarians should object to this kind of teaching, for would not even heaven itself be an unlovely place, if this were true?

It is very strange to think that Christian people get the idea of hell from the lips of Jesus himself. We all know that Jesus sometimes warned men of God's severity to punish sin; and this word Hell does occur a good deal in the New Testament. But people who have made a great doctrine of it are the last to understand rightly what the Teacher meant. I may just point out to you that in our new translation the word "Hell" is not found as often as in the old version. I will tell you why. There are two words in the Greek, both of which used to be translated Hell; and our revisers have now

left one word untranslated, so that we now read "Hades," which does not carry in it any such grievous thought of punishment and pain. I think that the other word, which is still translated "Hell" in our Scriptures, ought also to be changed, for it did not mean what our word Hell has now got to mean. Jesus was in the habit, as you all know, of speaking to the people in parables, and when he used the word translated Hell, he was, perhaps, making a parable which his Jewish hearers would understand. There was a vacant place not far from Jerusalem, valley into which rubbish and refuse used to be thrown ; and in this obnoxious place there were fires kept alight for the purpose of purifying the air. And just as these ever-burning fires burnt up the poisonous things, so, Jesus said, would God burn away the sins of men. But surely that does not mean that He will torture His children in flames for ever !

And people have been taught that Salvation is to escape from these eternal fires of Hell, that this is its first meaning. Now, if you want to understand the matter rightly you must put all such thoughts out of your mind. If we enquire what the word Salvation means, we

shall find that it means something very different. Salvation, what is it? The thought which comes nearest to it is that it is something that makes one sound and well, healthful—only, of course, the health refers to the soul rather than the body. Some of you know a little—as we elder ones know too much—what it is to be ill, faint of limb and weak in spirit, unable to go about doing the work, or enjoying the out-door pleasure of life. How the sick one looks out of the window and longs for strength to share in all the activity outside, longs to do as others can do, to be made whole, to run and not be weary, and walk and not faint. Will you keep fast hold of this thought a minute or two? For the Soul of man is often sick, in need of cleansing, in need of new strength and divine health. All the sinful thoughts, all the evil passions we give way to, all the selfishness there is in our hearts, are a kind of inward illness, the loss of our soul's power and grace. Sin is the sickness of man. And now I think we may begin to see what is the Salvation of Christ. When I read about the miracles of Jesus (though I think the reports were often exaggerated and a great deal was ascribed to him that he did not do)

there is one set of them that I always like the best. I mean the stories which show us Jesus healing the sick, and making the blind to see and the lame to walk. He raises them from their feebleness into a new life and hope, or, to use a phrase in the New Testament, "he makes them whole." If, then, we just move our thoughts from the bodily life to the spiritual life, we may say that Christ saves us by making us whole. He gives us a noble aim to live for; he gives us gracious thoughts; he gives us charity of heart. And all this is our true health, our higher life, our Salvation.

But here, again, some people make a very great mistake. The doctrine of the Atonement, as it is called, teaches that Christ has done everything *instead* of us. All they have to do, they suppose, is somehow to believe that Jesus has saved them, and then they are quite fit for heaven. He has saved them from Hell, by bearing the punishment of their sins, and now it is all safe, they have nothing at all to do themselves. The Unitarian says that this is wrong. Christ's life has done much for us; it has given us heavenly wisdom; his death has done much for us, by showing us how boundless

love can be. But it has done nothing *instead* of us. Let me give you an illustration. How much the mother does for her child; how willing the father is to help the child in everything that concerns its welfare; but still they do nothing *instead* of the child. If parents were to do the school lessons *instead* of their children, would the children ever make any progress in learning? Why, of course, they would grow up in ignorance. It is the same all through our life. We have to work our own way in the world. One may give another a hand, now and then, and help another, but, after all, we must each climb the mountain on our own feet! What are our hands and feet given us for except to take our part in the world's work? And in the same way God has given us all powers of truth and goodness, which we must use, and work out our own Salvation. Jesus shows us the way, gives us a helping hand, teaches and inspires us; but for all that God expects us each to be true and good, in the same manner, by our own efforts; and that is what Salvation means. It is at this point, as I have said, that people fall into a great error. They imagine that Jesus has done everything

in their *stead*; there is nothing left for them to do except only to believe; and so it is that there are many who "believe in Jesus" but who are not true and good in their lives. They forget that Jesus is their great pattern, and they must themselves strive to be like unto him in all their conduct and in their hearts' desires.

Yes! What Jesus has done for us is to show us how beautiful this our life may be, if we strive to make it so. And when you think about him in this way, do you not feel the wish within you to follow in his steps? Whenever we see anything noble, any noble action, any work of kindness, it is natural for us to desire to be like unto it in our own character. This is the grand way in which Christ is the Saviour of mankind. Nothing can be simpler when we have put aside the foolish ideas which have got into people's minds; we have only to look at the matter straightforwardly, and then it is clear to the least understanding. I sometimes think that a little child can understand it better than many grown-up people who have learned theology. For before the child has got its mind spoiled with the wrong teaching in which they have grown up, it looks upon Jesus in this

simple way, and prays to share in his goodness,
and to grow in likeness to his love, as it is put
in one of our hymns—

God of Jesus, hear me now,
Take the meek disciple's vow ;
Thou so good, so true, so kind,
Fill me with the Saviour's mind.

Lowly, loving, meek, and pure,
May I to the end endure ;
Be no more to ill inclined,
Like Messiah's perfect mind.

What heaven may be, after this life is done,
we know not ; but we know that it is for those
who have tried earnestly to follow in the foot-
steps of the man Christ Jesus ; by loving God
the Father with all their hearts and their neigh-
bours as themselves.





The Bible and other Books.

“Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction, which is in righteousness.” II. Timothy iv. 16.

IN this my fourth address to you, my younger hearers, I wish to speak for a little while about the Bible. It would hardly seem right if, in a course of lectures of this kind, we did not give some attention to the book which bears that name, and which all Christian people hold in such great reverence. There is scarcely a house anywhere that has not in it a copy of the Bible, or, as it is sometimes called, the Word of God. It is in the mansion of the rich ; it is in the cottage of the poor, though it often lies away out of sight, dusty and very little read. Very few people ever think about the Bible, and why it

has come to be so regarded. Most people seem to have an idea that God is better pleased with them for having a Bible about the house, or near at hand ready to be used on solemn occasions. I think it is very important that we should try to get right ideas about so wonderful a book, should try to understand its true value.

The name Bible comes to us from the Greek language, and simply means the book, or rather, the books. It would be much better if we kept it in the plural number, and always regarded the Bible as a number of books collected together and bound up in one. For it is the first, and in one sense, the greatest mistake that people make about the Bible to look upon it as one book, written straight on from Genesis to Revelation, and all the parts of it made to belong to each other by some plan which God arranged beforehand. In reality this Bible is a collection of many books. It is very much as if we were to see some old book on astronomy, with Julius Cæsar's history, and Chaucer's poems, and Shakespere's plays, and Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," and this hymn book which we use in our worship, and other writings from various sources, all joined together. The

Old Testament is a collection of thirty-nine different books, bound up in this way. Of course I do not mean to say that the works I have mentioned are to be compared in value with the Biblical books, or that they give you a perfect illustration. I merely use them in order to *suggest* how many-sided the Bible is, that it is made up of different and very varied writings, collected long afterwards, and not written straight on as some people think, by the inspiration of God, so as to be all one "Book divine." These books were written in different places, and long, long times apart. Some of the writers are quite unknown to us, even by name. They knew nothing of one another. And what is also to be noticed, they did not suppose, while engaged in the work, that their writings would ever be collected and made into one volume of sacred Scriptures, such as this book which we now have in our church and our homes. The Old Testament is a series of Jewish writings; the chief religious literature of that people from whom we receive many of our highest lessons of divine truth. One part is a history; another part gives us long accounts of their religious practices; a third, again, shows us the sort of


science which was once entertained among them. There are writings about the laws which were made to govern the life of Israel, not only on the Sabbath but on the other six days of the week. There were the Psalms, which might almost be called the great hymn book of the Church. There were the prophetic writings; not, as some people imagine, writings in which coming events were exactly foretold; but rather the writings in which great and loving souls spoke to the people to warn them against the evils of sin and point out the way of holiness and peace. And there were other writings of various kinds; made, as I said just now, each for its own purpose and each for its own time. Well, we have them now between the same covers, and this Greek word Bible, or Bibles, is the name by which we describe the whole collection. But I ought to tell you, at this point, that in the old English copies of the Bible, there were some other writings bound up along with these; they are called the Apocrypha, by which is meant that they have not been considered as sacred as what we have in our present Bible. The book which lies on our reading-desk there contains the Apocrypha; and some-

times when I read a chapter from that portion in our services (for it has some very beautiful chapters), I see a person here and there trying to find the place, which of course cannot be done in your small copies. Since the year 1611, when our present translation was made, the Apocrypha has generally been omitted. Besides these, again, there are Hebrew writings which come down to us from a very old time and which are still held in great honour by the Jews. We must try and understand that in those old ages there was no such thing as printing, and books were very rare ; that they were written and copied by hand on long rolls and carefully kept by priests and scribes ; and being so few it is no wonder that some of them should become very sacred in the estimation of the people. Josephus, one of their historians, who lived soon after Jesus Christ, said : " We have not an innumerable number of books among us ; but only twenty-two books, which contain the record of all the past time." When he speaks of twenty-two books, he means those which were specially held in honour at that period ; but as you have seen, our own Bible now contains thirty-nine, so that others have

been selected from the surrounding literature and allowed to stand, as it were, upon the same sacred level. We are told that Jesus used to go into the Synagogues, and that he there stood up to read. It was from these rolls that the Great Teacher read the lessons to his countrymen when they were met to worship God ; perhaps in our services here we have sometimes read the same passages from our English Bible.

I should like to have spoken about the Bible without using any language of fault-finding ; nor indeed am I about to say anything against the Bible itself. But people have held such a foolish notion about the Bible being word for word inspired, every line of it exactly what God wished it to be, that I am bound to point out to you the real facts of the matter. The writers were human, and we can sometimes see only too clearly how mistaken they were for want of better knowledge, and also how prone to be sinful like the rest of mankind. If we read the accounts of creation as given in the book of Genesis, and remember what science has been teaching us in these later times, we see that the Scripture writer did not possess the full knowledge, and therefore what he says must not be

supposed to correctly describe the beginning of the world. He wrote according to the ideas then held ; but the ideas were erroneous. Or again : sometimes when I take one of our lessons from the Psalms, in the course of my reading, I come across a verse which contains some very unjust, or uncharitable feeling, and I am obliged to leave it out. After a few sweet verses that fall upon one's ear like a strain of lovely music, there follows a passage full of harshness and bitterness ; and I do not like to read that, as if that also were the word of God for us. The writer calls down God's curses on his enemies ; but who is there that God will ever curse ? And so, in regard to verses of this kind, I say that the writer was giving way to the wrong spirit. He wrote in an age when the holiest lessons of our life were not learned, in an age before Jesus had said : " Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you." No. It is childish to suppose that the Bible is equally good and true, from beginning to end. It is human workmanship ; and shows us the imperfection, as well as the grandeur, of those who wrote its several parts. It is rich in noble religious thoughts which still uplift our feelings



when we worship the Father ; but it contains also things which we leave out in reading because they do not harmonise with our best thought about God and man, and spiritual life and love.

And the same must be said of the New Testament also, to which I now ask your attention for a few minutes. The New Testament is to us the most interesting theme, because it is the Christian Scripture, because Jesus Christ is its principal subject. You must know that soon after the time of Jesus there was a great increase in the number of books written. His life provided people with a fine, an exciting subject to write about. That one who had so moved the hearts of all who heard him preach, he who had possessed a mighty power of healing the sick, the Son of God, the King of the Jews, as he had called himself—he was something to write about ; and there came to be a fulfilment of an old saying : “ Of making many books there is no end.” After the time of Jesus, then, there were many accounts of his life written and circulated. It is generally imagined by good Christian people that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and the other

writings in our New Testament, are the only reports that were made about the Great Teacher. But indeed there were many others, nearly all of them claiming to be narratives of the doings of Jesus, or epistles about his teaching. I have brought with me this morning a book which is called the Apocryphal New Testament. It is a collection of the other writings that have been handed down to us from the ages soon after Jesus. A great number have been lost, and we hardly know even their names; but here are some that have been preserved and are now published as a separate book. There is much in this book that is very similar to what we find in our own Gospels; and much that is very different. The story of the young Jesus in the Temple among the doctors is told in this book in almost the very same words as are found in Luke's Gospel. But in another part of the same writing there is a story about Jesus, in his childhood, that is very unlike anything we ever read before; it is interesting, although it shows how foolish some of the talk was, how very much people exaggerated the facts of his life. Just to give you an idea, I will read a little piece from the "Infancy." It describes Jesus at

school. He is supposed to have been at one school already, where he proved to have more learning than his masters. "They brought him then to a more learned master, who, when he saw him said, 'say Aleph.' And when he had said Aleph, the master bade him pronounce Beth; to which the Lord Jesus replied: 'Tell me first the meaning of the letter Aleph, and then I will pronounce Beth.' But this master, when he lifted up his hand to whip him, had his hand presently withered, and he died. Then said Joseph to Mary, 'Henceforth we will not allow him to go out of the house; for everyone who displeases him is killed.'" Of course this story is very absurd. I have read it in order to make clear to you one point, that soon after the time of Jesus, there were a great number of stories about him floating in the air, as we may say, some of them strange and childish enough. The New Testament that we now have was not then in existence; the books which form it had not then been collected. And it was a long time before it became quite settled which books, out of all this mass of literature, should be chosen. Indeed the selection was not fully made until the lapse of about four hundred

years. And you may be quite sure that it required an immense amount of care to see which were the true, or the best writings. I sometimes look upon the New Testament as a sort of garden, the "Garden of the Lord." In these early Christian times the chief duty was to throw out the weeds so as to give the flowers full room to grow. And what happened? Why, that sometimes along with the weeds a flower was uprooted and thrown out; and sometimes a weed was left in among the flowers. I believe that we have in our New Testament the best selection that could have been made. But still, as I have already hinted, I think it may be seen that even our Gospels were written by imperfect hands, and from incorrect remembrances of Jesus, and with some touch of the exaggerations that belonged to the early Christian age, so that, to go to our figure again, a few weeds have been left in along with the sweet shrubs and plants, while in the writings which were rejected as tares there are some things that can only be likened to beautiful flowers shedding forth a rich perfume.

The subject of this address was the Bible and other books. But I have little time left in

which to speak about other books. And indeed I have only two points that I wish to ask you to notice before I conclude. The first is this: Christian people are apt to forget that the world has other Bibles besides our own; and that in every case these Scriptures are held in just as great reverence by their special followers. The Mohammedans have their Holy Scriptures or Koran. The Hindus have their Vedas. And wherever you go in search of a religion, you will find that it has its writings, its Bible. Now, is there anyone who will say that our Bible is "inspired," and the Scriptures of other nations are not? that ours contains all the truth which God has revealed, and those others are without the divine wisdom? We ought to take a larger and kinder view than to suppose that ours is the only "Word of God." It is right for us to believe that chapters in our Scripture, in Isaiah, or the Psalms, and especially in the Gospels, when we seem almost to read the very words of Jesus himself—it is right for us to believe that there is no teaching in all the world nobler than this; no higher wisdom, no language of man that teaches us more truly what is the perfect will of God.

But other Scriptures also contain some of God's wisdom, just as our Bible also has some earthly imperfections in its pages. If we say that the Bible is the word of God, we must admit that it is not His *only* word. We must remember the other Scriptures; and we must remember that "*all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

And, lastly, our reverence for the Bible ought to teach us that all good books—books, I mean, which are not called "Scripture" are divine gifts of wisdom. The mistake is often made of supposing that there is no religious good in anything besides "Scripture." I have occasionally read, in special seasons of worship here, short passages from other writings, such as Thomas-à-Kemp's "Imitation of Christ" or Goldsmith's "Deserted village," and I am sure that we must all have been impressed with their holy instruction. And whenever I do that, whenever I may now and then introduce some reading which is not taken from the Bible, my object is to lead you to believe, as I believe, that God is willing for us to learn His gracious thoughts wherever we may find them. He has not shut up the whole of His teaching within these two covers. He has given his Spirit to

other writers, and has inspired every line which breathes the life of truth and goodness. We may call them Scripture, or call them what we will, but if they lift up our heart as we read, if they teach us the divine way, then are other books God's gift also ; and then are they God's Word.





Our own Forefathers.

“But call to remembrance the former days.”—Heb. x. 32.

THE subject of our address this morning is “Our Unitarian Forefathers.” Some persons are very fond of telling us that their family at one time belonged to the aristocracy, that their great grandfather was a favourite with the king, and so forth. They keep a family tree, a chart of their descent, and we cannot fail to notice the great pleasure and pride they feel in thinking what a fine ancestry they can show. That may be very natural, though it is very foolish when they make too much of it, for, after all, one is no better for being so well descended.

’Tis only noble to be good,
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.

I think that it may be good for us to look back and remember the sort of men our *spiritual* forefathers were, and how nobly they did their work in their time. They are our ancestry in a religious sense. They have handed down to us our truer faith. They have handed down to us many great thoughts of God's will in the midst of human life, and left upon our path the bright example of their lives to help us in the performance of the duties which we have before us to-day. Let us try, then, to picture to ourselves some of the things of the past, and some of the men from whose labour we have derived so much blessing.

I should like to have led you in imagination out of England to see something of the movement which is called the Reformation, and things that took place three hundred years ago on the continent of Europe. I am afraid, however, that we have only a few moments in which to take one passing glance at this larger scene of action, because it is more to our purpose to learn what happened in our own country. You must try to remember, then, that for many centuries there had been only one Church, one great body of Christians, the

head of which was the Pope of Rome. But for a long time previously there had existed a great deal of dissatisfaction about the Church's teaching, and the practices of its priests. Religion had fallen into a low, useless condition. There was little earnestness about it; and people were commanded to believe certain doctrines which many found it difficult to accept, and to do things their consciences did not approve. If a person openly declared his opposition he was liable to be put to death as a heretic, so the evils had to be endured. But after a time the storm burst forth. Martin Luther thundered against the evil practices that went on in the name of religion, and declared that every man ought to read the Bible according to his conscience, and judge for himself. Then others joined in the struggle against the Church of Rome. One of the greatest of the reformers was named Calvin. He planted himself down in Geneva, and preached that the Bible and not the Pope should be the guide of faith, and that the services ought to be reformed. Now, you must not think that I speak of Luther and Calvin as if I agreed with all their teaching. The point I

want you to notice is that they tried to set the Bible free, and make worship truer and more earnest ; and when that is said in their praise, I fear that something must be added by way of blame. I will just give you one point in illustration. There were a few reformers who wanted to go further than Calvin ; they had something to say against the Trinity. They talked about the oneness of God, and denied that He was three in one—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Calvin was a Trinitarian ; and he, narrow minded, like the great Church he had come out of, would not hear of this Unitarian teaching ; and there is this blot upon his name : that under his orders a learned and holy man, Servetus, for writing against the Trinity, was burnt alive in Geneva. It is a day never to be forgotten, 27th October, 1553, when Servetus was committed to the flames for teaching what I have tried to teach you in some of these addresses. But Unitarianism did not perish. It still lived in the minds of a few, who treasured it quietly ; though we do not hear much more about it for a considerable time.

Now we must return to England. The Reformation movement had been going on here

too. Instead of there being only one Church overruled by the Pope of Rome, there was now a "Protestant" section, as it is called, that is to say, there were some priests and congregations who had shaken off the old authority, a body of people we should now speak of as the Church of England. But as time went on, some in turn began to draw out of the Church of England, and establish a still more free kind of worship. And then we come down to the year 1662, which I specially ask you to fix in your recollection. That was a great year in England.

Some of you, no doubt, have been in our Memorial Hall, Albert Square. If you read what is said over the doorway, you will find that it has been built in memory of 1662. There was an Act of Parliament passed in that year, entitled the "Act of Uniformity." There had been some provocation, no doubt, but the spirit of this Act was thoroughly wrong. What do you think its purpose was? It was to make all clergymen believe and teach exactly what was contained in the prayer-book; there was to be this one style of religion, and no more. It was a proposal altogether unjust. We know

very well that people *cannot* all think alike; they may all *pretend* to think alike, but how can any person think to order in that way? The very idea is childish; everyone must have his own thoughts on religious matters just as on other matters; no one can cut them, like a piece of cloth, to any exact pattern, at the bidding of Parliament. The end of it was that two thousand clergymen gave up their livings in the Church. Some of them were among the best, the most educated, the most earnest ministers. They were doing much good in their parishes; they were beloved by their people. But they could not play this trick with their conscience. They were willing rather to become poor, and begin the world again.

Their altars they forego, their homes they quit,
Fields which they love, and paths they daily trod,
And cast the future upon providence;
As men, the dictate of whose inward sense
Outweighs the world.

Of course you will understand that these men were not Unitarian. Unitarianism was not then the question. They were men who

were ready to suffer for conscience sake. Now, this is one of the holiest thoughts in our creed. I have tried to show you that God is one Being; but there is something besides saying that, something besides denying the Trinity. There is a voice of truth that bids us every one to be true to our hearts. I have tried to show you that Jesus was not God; that he was man. But there is something besides this; there is a spirit of courage that bids us, like Jesus, be brave and of good cheer, for the sake of our religion. These men were full of good conscience; and a good conscience, I repeat, is better than all mere beliefs, whether Trinitarian or Unitarian.

Well, this new dissent began to grow, severe laws were passed against the Nonconformists, and they had to build their chapels in out-of-the-way places, in order to worship God without being molested, and even then they often *were* molested. But there was no stopping them. The more the king and Parliament tried to pull up the tree, the faster its roots laid hold of the soil. I want you now to consider one particular sect among these Dissenters. They were called Presbyterians. They were an

earnest body of believers. They were soon busy in erecting meeting houses for the continuance of their worship of God, and the great point to notice is this, that when they built their meeting houses, they left them *free*. That is, they did not say, here must the Trinity be always taught, or anything of that kind; they said nothing about such things; but they left each building free, so that those who came there to worship afterwards might decide upon the particular sort of religious teaching for themselves. And as time wore on, the teaching slowly changed, until it became Unitarian. This is how it is that many of our old chapels to-day are still known as Presbyterian. The Presbyterians built them, not for Unitarian worship, but for *free* worship, for the freedom which had been so dearly won. Of course these chapels have nearly all been rebuilt, but in some cases they have not shifted from the spot where they were first erected, and for all these two hundred years the congregations have been maintained, the younger members growing up instead, as the elders died away, while the teaching slowly grew to be Unitarian—our own Unitarian faith.

I should like to refer to one of these old meeting houses, the story of which is so interesting to us. Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, is an excellent illustration of what I have been saying. There was a young clergyman in Manchester in 1662, whose name was Newcome. When the Act of Uniformity was passed, he gave up his living. He was one of the two thousand men who kept their conscience pure. For some time he was not allowed to preach. He used to go as a listener to the church where he had formerly been the minister. Soon, however, he got a license to hold service with a few of his friends in a private house; and thus several years passed. In 1694, when times had mended a little, Cross Street Chapel was built for him. But he was then an old man, and he did not live much longer. He was the founder of Nonconformity in Manchester. He was not Unitarian; he was a preacher of Christ and the liberty with which Christ has made us free. The chapel was free in regard to theology. Then came a succession of ministers under whose preaching, little by little, the doctrines became Unitarian. The building was twice attacked by the mob,

so strong was the angry feeling against this dissent. To-day, as you know, its ministers are left in peace to preach according to their freedom, that God is one, and Jesus Christ is His human son. The trust-deeds are still "open," as we say ; and the teaching of the place is Unitarian, as we hope it may remain, until God sends us some yet nobler truth.

The first actual Unitarian chapel was built in London for Theophilus Lindsey. Mr. Lindsey was a clergyman who felt doubts about the doctrine of the Trinity. He found that he did not believe in the threeness of God, which as a clergyman he was supposed to accept. That was about a hundred and ten years ago. Already Unitarianism was being preached in some of the free Presbyterian chapels, notably in the one at Leeds, where Joseph Priestley was minister, and it was making a great stir. But there was no chapel as yet called Unitarian, like ours ; and it was to the task of preaching our Unitarian faith in London that Lindsey set himself. He went to London, with very little money in his pocket, and the future all unknown to him, and began, in an auction room, to hold Unitarian services.

The friends who came round him built the chapel still standing in Essex-street. Barristers, members of Parliament, and some of the foremost men of the time, used to go to hear the addresses of Mr. Lindsey, who for twenty years worked in that place, and by his eloquence made the Unitarian Gospel known in London. We thankfully turn to the honoured name of Theophilus Lindsey to-day as the name which belongs to the building of the first Unitarian Chapel—the name of a devoted man who is held in warm esteem and affection throughout the whole body of Unitarians.

I must say a word or two also about that other man of noble spirit, Joseph Priestley, who may be said to have been the great leader of the Presbyterian movement toward Unitarian teaching. The life of Priestley is one of the finest examples we have of hard and loving labour for the welfare of his country, and of patiently bearing an immense amount of persecution. There is a statue lately erected in Birmingham to this great man, who was no less eminent in science than in religion. It shows us that the people of Birmingham have learned to honour him afterwards better than

some of them did in his time, for great mobs were set against him by High Church magistrates, and they burnt his meeting house, and wrecked his home, on account of his religious belief. He was more than once in danger of his life, and after suffering many hardships, an old man, he left the English shores he loved so well, the country to which he had given the service of a noble life, to end his days in America. Whenever I think of Lindsey, I think of Priestley too. They are two men who, in different ways, raised our banner and led the van, and fought bravely for the simple faith which we hold so dear. They were friends of one another; and we look back upon their work with our heart full of thankful pride, that we are able to follow such men.

My time is nearly gone, and I have told you very little of the great story of our forefathers. I should like to have spoken about one or two others, some of them in England, and Channing and Parker in America, but I must draw to the close. I think you have seen what sort of men they were, full of courage and love to God and mankind, full of holy deeds. Our Unitarian Gospel, which we try to uphold in this

Church (a Church in which such similar men as Dr. Beard and Mr. Herford have been ministers) shines more brightly for their names. They show us in what spirit we ought to carry on the cause of true religion. We in a little while must follow them into the after world; till then we are here, in the midst of life, to do our part. You who are yet young, you who are now growing up to man and womanhood, must be ready to do some service, some holy duties, to which God calls you now; and I do not think that you can enter upon your course in any better way than by trying to copy those who did so well before you, who did their best in the strength and love which God gave them. The times have, no doubt, changed. We live in an age of larger freedom. We are allowed to worship God according to our own consciences. Yet even now there lingers a great deal of ill-feeling against those who hold Unitarian ideas. And we have to break down this prejudice; we have to show that our faith is true; we have to be true to it ourselves. We have to let our lives show forth the righteousness of Jesus; his pure and gentle spirit; we have to make the beauty of his religion felt by

all with whom we have contact, until they learn to regard us as his disciples, because our life bears good fruit, according to his word.

One thing more and I have done. It is a repetition, but it is very important to be borne in mind. As I have explained it to you this morning, Unitarianism, perhaps, looks like a new doctrine. It did not begin until about a hundred years ago. Three or four hundred years ago you could hardly find a Unitarian anywhere. There were no Unitarian chapels; the Presbyterians slowly became Unitarian during the last century, and Lindsey started the first Unitarian chapel in London in 1774. Somebody once complained that he did not like new views. He liked the good old views. That is just the point. Our Unitarianism is new. Yes, but it is also old, as old as the Apostles, going back to the very day of Christ. The first Church believed in one God. And that Unitarian truth which came from the lips of Jesus himself, got overshadowed, covered with superstition, hidden out of sight. It was covered up with Trinitarian superstition for many centuries. Then it shone forth again. These men made it shine out amid the darkness.

And as Christians get wiser, they will come back to it. The man Christ Jesus will be the great teacher once more in all his simplicity, teaching us to say there is one God, even the Father ; our Father which is in heaven, hallowed be His name.





Religion.

“And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”—II. Cor. vi. 16.

TAKE leave to supplement the five discourses recently spoken to you, my young friends of this Church, with one concluding address. Glancing over the subjects on which I have spoken to you, I think you may have caught up a few Unitarian lessons which it would be well for you, as they say, to get off by heart. The Unity and Fatherhood of God, the life of Christ as our great example, what the Bible is by the side of other books, and the religious work done by our forefathers in preparing the way for this better faith—these are the subjects on which I have spoken to you. I wish to add a few

words more, and this time I will speak in a somewhat different strain. You have heard what the Unitarian faith is in regard to its chief doctrines. Now I would appeal to you to cultivate it as your own personal religion, and to begin to make it yours while you are still young. For Unitarianism is not something to be known only by the head, as one knows that the earth circles round the sun in the boundless fields of space ; but it is something that should become a part of one's self. It must be loved. It must be obeyed. It must perform its sacred mission within our life and heart.

The first part of religion is this of worship. It brings with it a heavenly voice which bids us pause in our life and lift up our spirits far above the affairs of earthly sense and time. Did you ever ask yourselves what is the real meaning of our coming together in this manner to join in hymn and holy reading, in prayer and praise ? "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work ; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." Though we may not take it in the same sense as when that commandment was given to the Jews of old, we still seem to hear that voice of the past echoing in

mankind. Here is the answer to it. The usual toils of life are stopped. The spade and trowel, the pen and the figures, the traffic of six days, are put aside. We try to forget them. Let them go : let us seek God ; " all," says our hymn, " all shall be Thine at least to-day." So also another of our sweet hymns calls this day the "bridal of earth and sky." For now we begin to remember that there is something in our life besides the things which we are obliged to think so much about in the week, and that we ought to attend also to the Spirit which comes down from heaven. If you have ever been on the summit of a high mountain you will have noticed how very different all the world looks, so wide, so still, below. You are quite out of the sound of its noise ; you forget the narrow street, and the toil and care of life ; you breathe a calmer and purer air. How full of rest it is to look out from that high point of view ! May not this be an illustration of what worship does for us ? Not now the bodily part, but the soul, the spiritual part of us ascends to the top of the mount of life, and finds refreshment there from the work and care of the week. The idea is that if we can get

quite away from earthly thoughts, and near to God upon the mount, then we shall be refreshed by His love, and feel some of His perfect peace. Perhaps you that are young may not feel this as much as some of your elders do. You have not arrived at the time when life has in it a great deal of weariness, and its duties press heavily upon one's spirits. Life is still fresh to you. Youth is elastic and hopeful. It is the morning ; it is the spring, when the sunshine is sweet, and the air is soft with showers. And so, as I say, you do not as yet feel the value of these hours of rest and worship. But when you get older, you may find, perhaps, that there is something in the heart, some spiritual portion of your nature, which can only find its satisfaction in heavenly thoughts, and in the sense of God the Father very near to you. The writer of Psalm cxxii. begins : " I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." The world has changed much since then, and we live in circumstances very different ; yet here are people still glad when the hour of worship has arrived and they can go up to the holy place, and into

the presence of the Most High ; and here again the same blessing is sent down for all who worship Him in spirit and in truth. I have heard some good people say that if anything has happened to prevent them from attendance at worship on the Sunday, they have not felt right for several days afterwards. They feel as if they had missed some little of the light of the heart; they feel that some of the highest spiritual joy was wanting. It does not seem like Sabbath if they cannot go to unite in the aspirations of God's house, and be touched by the divine spirit. Life itself would not be worth half as much if they could not thus sometimes lay aside every weight, and come into the presence of the high and holy Spirit, and think of God's goodness filling all heaven and earth, that goodness which we are all so apt to forget amid our daily occupations. And I believe that those who thus long to come near to God, and take His calm and gentle help into their hearts, are following one of the most beautiful instincts of our nature, which God has made in His own likeness.

But worship is only one half of religion ; and the other half, which worship should

always remind us of, is upright and holy living. God's presence not merely brings us refreshment and gladness for the passing hour; it aims to teach us how to frame our whole life in truth, and to do always that which is good. Now the Unitarian faith, which I have been explaining to you lately, lays special emphasis on this point—a righteous and kindly life. I do not want to say anything uncharitable; but it often appears to me as if some Christian Churches, Churches of another kind than ours, do not lay as much stress as we try to do upon this supreme matter. For they have so much to say, often, about what you must believe, and about the mere forms, that they have hardly any time for attending to the simple things of character, which are far more important. Some of them say that Jesus has worked out all Salvation in our stead, and they say it so much, that they rather overlook the far greater principle, that the centre and life of religion is to do good and be good, each in himself. Some persons think it so needful to take sacraments, and obey the various fasts and feasts of the year, that they are very apt to overlook the far greater obedience of honest life and kind-

hearted affections. I have seen religious people who have piously taken the sacraments, and believed what they were told as to Christ being their Saviour, who thought that this sort of religion was nearly all that God required of them; and they did not seem to understand that they ought to try and become more truthful, more gentle, more like Christ, in themselves. Well, I say that, on the other hand, our Unitarian teaching has always made it a special point to say, see to your whole life, that you do not depart from the path of conscience; see to your life that you are kindly affectioned in word and deed. Ask a true Unitarian what is the greatest thing that God desires of us, and he will say it is to have a noble, a perfect character; to commit no sin; to do the will of God. Whatsoever things are pure, and lovely, and of good report, think on these things; they are the best. We do not tell you that you must understand all the plan of Salvation, for the working of God's Spirit is larger than *our* understanding. We do not tell you that you must obey some specially selected customs, or you cannot be saved. This is what we put first, as the chief commandment which

our worship lays upon us : Get wisdom ; be careful to live as God would have you live—in virtue, in all sweet grace and tender love. There is nothing higher ; there is nothing more truly religious than this. We think that our life is like the building of a house, which must be laid upon a solid foundation, must be constructed thoroughly in every part, must have no bad workmanship covered up out of sight ; but every brick and stone of it be laid in proper position, according to that excellent verse of Longfellow's, when he was singing about some builders of an ancient time, who felt that there were heavenly watchers looking on to see how their work was done :—

Let us do our work as well,
Both the unseen and the seen ;
Make the house where gods may dwell—
Beautiful, entire, and clean.

Unitarian worship, then, is for making our life better and nobler ; its purpose, to teach us how to perform our duties with more earnest mind and heart, and to love our neighbours even as ourselves. The foundation—as I have shown you in a previous discourse,—what we build upon, is the life of Christ. We would try to

be not hearers only, but doers of his word. Our religion brings us here to worship God ; but the voice which always speaks to us in this uplifted hour, is a voice of *life*, bidding us put away the evil and always try to do that which is well-pleasing in His sight, as followers of Jesus Christ. Will you bear this in mind for a few moments while I go on to speak of something which seems to grow out of it, and which has particular reference to you in the days of your youth.

Let me take it for granted, as I am sure I may, that now in your younger years you feel within you the desire to grow up to true man and womanhood ; the life of usefulness and good to others, the life "like unto Christ." Now, this perfect life does not come of itself ; it requires to be learned, to be grown into, just as one grows into knowledge—by studious effort ; or very much as the apprentice learns his trade, by continuous practice. It does not come all at once ; it comes a little at a time. Are we not told that the child Jesus grew in wisdom as in stature ; the child grew and waxed strong in spirit ? It did not then come all at once ; it came a little at a time, and that must ever be

the way. And now I ask you to take notice of this point—that there is in our human nature a very curious, a very wonderful tendency for us to *repeat* what we do and are, to form what is called habit ; just as when a wheel is turned by the hand, it acquires a tendency to go round again and again, each time more easily. What we are enacting or thinking to-day tends to repeat itself, and to become more easy to us. You who have yet most of your life before you have your habit of life only as yet half settled ; after a few more years you will have got fixed in certain lines of conduct and of feeling, and they will rule over you. I ask you, then, what shall those lines be ? The difference between the good and the evil man is chiefly that one was able slowly to make good habits, while the other, by little and little, fell into evil, in their younger days. They were much alike at first ; they started, as it were, together ; they learned either good or evil in the same manner, by gradual means, by practice, by habit ; only perhaps it is always more difficult to learn the life of goodness, just as it is more difficult to walk up-hill than to go down a decline, on your bodily feet. But if, therefore, it is of such im-

portance that you should try to form good habits early in life, there is one habit especially that I would urge upon you to make quite sure of, and to keep at it until it becomes easier for you to obey ; for it is a habit which has a very gracious influence on us all, to sweeten our whole character. Perhaps you know what I am going to say. I mean this habit of worship ; I mean this sacred custom of bringing our lives into the presence of God, that His blessing may rest upon us. I have been pleased to notice some few of you, my young hearers, who come to these services with unfailing regularity ; you have got into the habit of it of your own accord, and I suppose you feel it quite natural to be in your place at chapel when Sunday brings round the time for worship. It may be that you do not understand the service throughout, and, especially, perhaps, the sermon ; yet it is a custom which will have gracious influence upon your life, and tend to make you a better, a happier, man or woman, if you keep steadily faithful to the Spirit that speaks with still small voice : “ They shall be my people, and I will be their God.” And so the precept I would give you is, do not allow yourselves to be drawn

aside from regular attendance upon divine service; for though, as I have said, it gets comparatively easy to keep on in a good way when we are in it, it is not so easy to get back into the path when we have gone aside. I have known many young people begin well; they have been amongst our worshippers for a time, but have got apart from us; and some, in disconnecting themselves from the services of religion, have fallen into evil, and lost the higher life they once seemed to promise. They excused themselves a little at first; then slowly formed another kind of habit, slowly broke off this one, which is so good.

It is the little rift within the lute,
That by-and-by will make the music mute,
And ever widening, slowly silence all.



QUESTIONS.

DISCOURSE I.

1. What is meant by the word "Trinity?"
2. Is the word found in the New Testament?
3. What have you to say about the passage in I. John, v. 7?
4. Do any other passages speak of God as Three in One?
5. When Paul speaks of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the same verse, was he thinking of these three as the one God? Give your reason for your answer.
6. Did Jesus claim Godhead himself?
7. What does Jesus mean when he says: "I and My Father are one?"
8. Does he speak of his disciples and himself as one in the same sense?
9. We find that Jesus prayed to the Father: can that possibly mean that the second person of the Trinity is praying to the first?
10. Is the Holy Spirit a third person, or another name for God?
11. What do you conclude from all this, according to the title of the present discourse?

DISCOURSE II.

1. Did the first apostles think of God as a Trinity?
2. What was the first step in the formation of the doctrine?
3. Do you know any other religion besides Christianity, the founder of which has afterwards been raised to the level of a God-man in people's thoughts?
4. Mention two sources from which Trinitarian ideas got into the Christian faith?
5. What about the third person?
6. Give the little parable which concludes the present discourse.
7. Say how you think of God in your own mind.

DISCOURSE III.

1. When John describes Jesus as the Lamb of God, what Jewish custom is he thinking of?
2. Were all such customs to be done away?
3. Does Hell mean a place of torture where the soul is to be turned into fire for ever?
4. Has the new version of the Testament made any change in regard to the doctrine of Hell?
5. What does the word Salvation mean?

6. Has Jesus accomplished Salvation *instead* of us. Give an illustration of how he does much *for* us, but not *instead*.
7. What is the principal thing that Jesus has done for mankind?
8. And what is the only *sure* way of Salvation?

DISCOURSE IV.

1. What does the word "Bible" mean; and should it be read in the singular or plural?
2. Mention some of the subject matters which are treated of in the various books.
3. What is the Apocrypha?
4. Were the Bible writers sometimes mistaken in their views? Give two illustrations.
5. Were our New Testament Gospels and Epistles, etc., the only books written about Jesus in the early Christian ages?
6. What is the Apocryphal New Testament?
7. Are the Sacred Books of other religions inspired in the same way as our Bible?
8. Does God give the same sort of inspiration now?

DISCOURSE V.

1. What do you mean by the Reformation?
2. Why was Servetus burned to death?

3. What was the "Act of Uniformity?"
4. Mention the great events of the year 1662 in England.
5. Were these men who left the Church Unitarian or Trinitarian? If you say Trinitarian, why do you claim them as your rightful forefathers?
6. Can you tell me anything about the beginning and history of some of our old chapels—Cross Street, Manchester, for instance?
7. What was the special wisdom of the Presbyterians when they built their chapels?
8. Name the first "Unitarian" Chapel, and its minister.
9. Who was the leader of the movement from Presbyterian to Unitarian?
10. Is Unitarian a new doctrine or an old one, or both old and new?

DISCOURSE VI.

1. What is the first part of all religion?
2. What is the second part?

1870-1871

